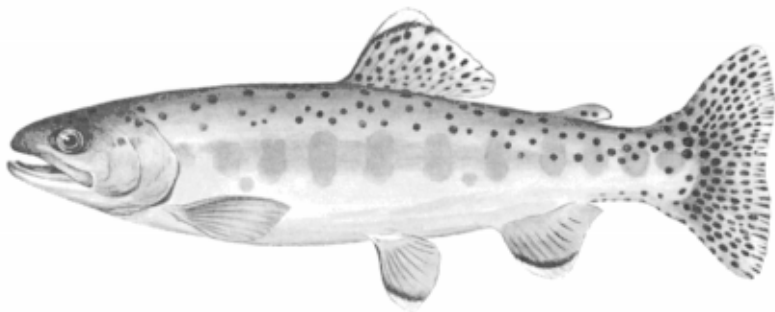


GOLDEN TROUT
Salmo gairdneri

GOLDEN TROUT

Salmo aguabonita



DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The typical golden trout is a highly colored fish with distinctive shades of yellow and red on the lower sides and belly. The cheeks and opercle often are red, as are the pectoral, ventral, and anal fins. The dorsal and anal fins usually have distinct white tips, sometimes bordered with black.

The spotting is distinctive, there being a relatively few round black spots well defined against the clear background. The spots on the dorsal and caudal fins are also distinct.

The parr marks are distinct, not only on the young fish but commonly on the adults as well. This is usually a good distinguishing characteristic.

Although typical golden trout are easy to distinguish from other trout, there is a great deal of variation in their coloration and spotting. Some golden trout will be found to have many more spots than shown in our illustration, while others have fewer, sometimes confined to the caudal peduncle and tail.

DISTRIBUTION IN CALIFORNIA

Originally golden trout were limited to a few streams in the upper Kern River drainage, at elevations of from about 6,300 to 10,500 feet. Beginning at an early date, man has extended their distribution, by transplanting wild fish or stocking hatchery-reared fish. Golden trout are now present in California in a number of streams and lakes of the Sierra Nevada from Alpine and El Dorado counties to the north to Inyo and Tulare counties to the south, mostly at elevations over 8,000 feet. In recent years they have also been introduced into waters in Siskiyou and Trinity counties.

INTERESTING FACTS

The extremely beautiful coloration of the golden trout has resulted in their being named the State Fish. Moreover, these fish are usually found in streams and lakes of great beauty.

This trout was originally described by David Starr Jordan in 1892 from specimens taken in Cottonwood Creek, Inyo County. However, it was not originally native to Cottonwood Creek, but had been brought there in 1876 from Mulkey Creek, a tributary of the South Fork of the Kern River. The greater number of black spots, and especially the presence of spots below the lateral line, is said to distinguish *S. a. whitei*, native to the Little Kern River watershed, from *S. a. aguabonita*.



Bighorn Lake, Fresno County, a typical golden trout lake—Photo by Phil Pister.